

The end

When the old man returned he looked at Fionn and saw in his eyes the knowledge he had spent so many years searching for. "There is nothing for me to teach you now," he said sadly. "You must go to Tara and take your father's place at the head of the Fianna and use your knowledge wisely. Fionn set off at once to join the Fianna. From then on whenever he had a problem all he had to do was to put his thumb in his mouth and he would have the answer.



2010/11

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The Salmon of Knowledge

Irish Legends



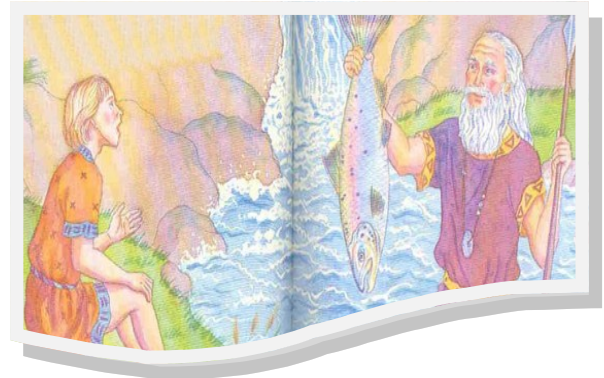
Long ago in Ireland,

the king had a special army of soldiers to guard him called the Fianna. Cumhall was their most famous leader. His enemies were jealous of him, so they killed him. Cumhall's wife was afraid that her young son Fionn might be killed so she took him to two women warriors who lived on the slopes of the Sliabh Bloom mountains. She asked the women to teach her son all that his father would have known as one day her son would become one of the Fianna



At that time you had to pass difficult tests if you wanted to join the Fianna. You had to defend yourself against the spears of nine men using only a shield, jump over a pole as high as his head and recite twelve books of poetry. When the women had taught Fionn all the fighting skills he would need they sent him to Finnéigeas the poet, to learn the twelve books of poetry.

Finnéigeas lived on the banks of the river Boyne. He had spent many years living beside the river and fishing in it. There was a fish in the Boyne known as the salmon of Knowledge. The person who caught and ate it would know everything there was to know in the world. Finnéigeas liked the fair-haired Fionn and agreed to become his teacher. One day as Fionn was learning poetry he heard a shout. He rushed to the river and there stood Finnéigeas holding a large salmon. "Take the fish and cook it for me please Fionn" he said. "Remember you must not eat any of it.



Fionn did as he was told. He cleaned the salmon over the fire to cook. All was well until a blister rose on the side of the salmon. Without thinking, Fionn reached out and broke the skin of the blister. In doing so he burnt his thumb and sucked it to stop the pain

What happened then?

